

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



Enclosure 2a
July 7, 2011

Meeting

RIDE

Thursday, July 7, 2011 - 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Attending: George Caruolo (chairman), Lorne Adrain, Carolina Bernal, Colleen Callahan, Robert Carothers, Karin Forbes, Patrick Guida, Mat Santos

Absent: Betsy Shimberg

The meeting convened at 4:00 p.m.

Chairman Caruolo welcomed everyone and acknowledged that Regent Shimberg would not be joining the meeting that afternoon.

Approval of Agenda

On a motion duly made by Regent Forbes and seconded by Regent Callahan it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education accept the day's agenda.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follow:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

Alter the agenda

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Guida to move the items for approval up on the agenda so as to not run the risk of not getting to them, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education accept to alter the agenda by moving the items.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follow:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

Approval of Minutes

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Guida, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the

June 2, 2011 – Board of Regents Meeting.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative, as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

Because Regent Guida was not present at the June 16th BOR Work Session and he seconded the motion to approve the minutes of both the June 2nd and June 16th meeting, another motion was made to approve the June 16th BOR Work session.

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Forbes, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the

June 16, 2011 – Board of Regents Work Session.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative, as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

Commissioner's Report

Next, Commissioner Gist gave an update on:

Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Demonstration Program

- RI has just completed the 2nd year full of Pre-Kindergarten Demonstration Program.
- RIDE has been conducting a formal evaluation study for the two full years.
- The final evaluation results are being analyzed, and we expect a final report by the fall.
- The evaluation focused on the quality of the classrooms and the outcomes of the participants as compared with a group of like children who did not participate in high-quality Pre-K.
- Twenty-one (21) applications were submitted for the first year of implementation.
- A review team reviewed and ranked all the applications.
- Unfortunately, the \$700,000 that was in the Governor's budget to support these classrooms was eliminated from the state budget. There are no state funds appropriated for continued the Pre-K programs this year.
- RI has an opportunity to apply for a Race to the Top grant that is specific to Early Childhood Education, but if RI does not have an Early Childhood program, RIDE is very concerned that it will be very difficult to stay competitive.
- RIDE is trying to pull 3 or 4 different possible sources of funding to keep 3 of the 7 classrooms opened in order for RI to stay competitive in the Race to the Top opportunity.

School-Construction Projects

Next, Commissioner Gist gave an update on the school-construction projects for Bristol Warren, Paul Cuffee Charter Public School, and Little Compton.

- RIDE will be asking the BOR to consider these projects for approval at the July 21, 2011, meeting.
- The Board of Regents reviews and certifies the Necessity of School Construction for district-owned and -operated schools reimbursed through the Housing Aid program.

- The legislature instituted a moratorium on new school-construction approvals for the next three years with the exception of those projects that are necessary because of immediate health and safety reasons.

Public Remarks

Chairman Caruolo requested that all who had testified in the past and were simply reiterating what they had previously testified on should please refrain from testifying so as to give the Board time to attend to its agenda. He also asked that public remarks be kept to 3 minutes or less so as to allow the Board of Regents to continue doing the people's business.

There was public testimony from the following individuals:

Frank Flynn, President of RI Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, spoke in opposition of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Steven Smith [President of the Providence Teachers Union] spoke in opposition of the Teacher English Competency cut-scores.

Channavy Chhay, new Executive Director, Socio Economic Development Center for South East Asians, spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Christine Lopes, Director for Community External Relations for the Mayoral Academy, spoke in support of the Mayoral Academy proposal.

Kate Nagle, Providence resident, and Cherri Cruz, spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Mike Magee [Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Mayoral Academies] spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Francheska Calderon, member of the first graduating class of the Amistad Academy in New Haven, CT, spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Cathy Kaiser, member of the Jamestown School Committee, but speaking on her own behalf, spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Anna Cano-Morales, Director of Strategic Partnerships, RI-CAN, spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Joanne Spaziano passed on testifying.

Susan O'Connell spoke in opposition of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy and the Teacher English Competency cut-scores.

Sarah Melin, Bilingual and ESL Teacher in Providence, spoke in opposition of the Teacher English Competency cut-scores.

Alan Ginet, professional historian, spoke about his concerns with the summary document of the public hearings.

Chris Mastrangelo, Providence resident, spoke in opposition of the Teacher English Competency cut-scores.

Dick Tomline, spoke in opposition of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Andrea Iannazzi passed on testifying.

Tylor Doran, Providence resident, spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Anna Kuperman, Providence Public Schools teacher, spoke in opposition of the Teacher English Competency cut-scores.

Ellie Wyatt spoke in opposition of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

Ed Benson, retired Phonology Professor at UConn, spoke in opposition to the Teacher English Competency cut-scores.

Peter Nero, Cranston Schools Superintendent, spoke in opposition to the Achievement First Mayoral Academy.

Kathleen Torregrossa passed on testifying but submitted written comments.

Scott Robinson, resident of Cranston, spoke about his concerns with the summary of the public hearings listing him as a Cranston firefighter.

Nyrobi Almonte, spoke in support of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy proposal.

APPROVAL ITEMS:

The first approval item was Chairman Caruolo's asking for a motion to have the July 21st BOR work session changed to a Board of Regents meeting to accommodate the approval of some of the school-construction projects that were before the Regents that are health and safety in nature and changes in the teacher certification tests by ETS. Regent Carothers opposed the motion because of the lateness of the request and that he had scheduled his summer vacation around the schedule of BOR meetings that require voting. He was assured that, other than the school construction and ETS tests, no other voting items would be placed on the July 21st BOR meeting agenda. Regent Forbes also asked for clarification that the July 21st meeting would be held at the 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. timeslot.

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Callahan it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education accept to change the July 21st BOR Work Session to a Board of Regents Meeting.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follow:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

Approval of the RI Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School Application

On a motion duly made by Regent Santos and seconded by Regent Callahan it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the RI Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School Application.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follow:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

Approval of the Teacher English Competency Cut-Scores

Prior to a vote taking place, Commissioner Gist addressed the Board on the Teacher English Competency Cut-Scores regulation that took place in March. She started by clarifying that the regulation is not about accents.

- It very explicitly says it is not about accents. This is about English competency for teachers who are teaching children, whether they are teaching in a traditional, typical classroom setting or in bilingual classroom setting.
- The definition of being bilingual is being competent in two languages. It is hard for many of us to appreciate, but folks have come to the R.I Department of Education to apply for certification with translators.
- It is very important that students have at minimum a teacher who is competent in the English language, and that is the regulation that the BOR passed back in March.
- The qualifying score is in the basic range of competency, and that is the bare minimum for someone to be eligible for employment in our schools in R.I.

There was discussion around:

- How many teachers will be impacted by this regulation?
- What process are the locals using to determine who is not competent?
- Is it overkill to pull certificates from teachers who do not pass the test?
- Are all new teachers coming into the profession at this time held to these regulations regardless of their national origin?
- Has there been feedback from other states that have implemented this type of regulation?
- Is there a plan for using this opportunity to identify competence at the initial certification process?
- Concern over the lack of public knowledge and the major disconnect between the central office, local school districts, and teachers about the impact that the implementation of the Teacher English Competency regulation will have on their careers.
- Why did RIDE choose the Versant Pro test?
- How does the range work?
- Are there any data or evidence about where testers score in other states that have used this test?
- Lack of collaboration with teachers when the original regulation was promulgated.

After some discussion around the cut-score, Chairman Caruolo stated that this is either a problem or not. There are either a number of teachers in our state who do not speak English adequately to be considered an English speaker to be teaching our children, or it's an anecdotal urban myth. If we do have people who cannot speak English and are educating our children in English, than that is a problem. If we have a huge problem, we need this regulation today; if not, we need it to be on the books so that it can be enforced. The Chairman went on to say that the Board of Regents is a board of directors who rely on RIDE to do very sophisticated work in order to carry out legislative mandates on behalf of the people of the State of R.I. The Board's fixation of where to set the cut score should be admirable, but it is not where the Board needs to be.

He suggested that the Board of Regents direct RIDE to pay close attention to what happens and to report back to the Board by January. If some of the more dire perspectives are starting to come out in the wash, then things need to be changed. There is language in the regulation that gives locals the flexibility to not get rid of the teacher but to remove the teacher from the classroom and to allow the teacher to do whatever the teacher has to do to pass this test and get back in the classroom.

If there is a big problem and this regulation and cut-score do not address it correctly, then RIDE is directed to let the Board of Regents know that.

As far as the regulation's being used politically by an administration to punish teachers, that is something that the Board cannot control, but it is putting out a product that it can defend. He recommended that the Board approve the cut-score and that it be strictly monitored every time it is used as to what the outcome is and that it be reported back to the Board by January. If the Board finds that there are 350 teachers in Providence or Pawtucket or Woonsocket who were let go because of this, then the Board needs to look at it closely. Is it because the test is flawed, is it because the process is flawed, and was it because there were many teachers who do not speak English -- and the Board will want answers.

Commissioner Gist reiterated that it is not about accents, but she wanted to clarify that in the event that an accent is so heavy that it prevents communication, it can be, and that is allowable under civil rights legislation. It is not about: I am competent in English and I speak with an accent; it goes much further.

She also shared how she deeply values people who speak multiple languages, and she wanted everyone to understand that this is not about anything except wanting to ensure that there are competent teachers in our classrooms. She is a great believer in dual-language education and founded a dual-language program when she worked in the D.C. school system.

Next, Chairman Caruolo asked for a motion directing the Commissioner and her staff to provide the BOR with a report no later than January 15th, which details for the BOR every instance of the regulation as utilized in each and every district in this state with all details, to be determined by RIDE.

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Forbes, it was

VOTED:	That	the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education be provided with a detailed report no later January 15.
	Vote:	8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:
	YEAS:	G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos
	NAYS:	0

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Forbes it was

VOTED:	That	the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approve the Teacher English Competency Cut-Scores of the Versant Pro Speaking and Writing assessments, with a qualifying score of 64 for each assessment, to give effect to section T-1-11 of the Regulation.
	Vote:	7 members voted in the affirmative and 1 member voted in the negative as follows:
	YEAS:	G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos
	NAYS:	C. Bernal

Next, Chairman Caruolo made a motion to roll over the discussion on Achievement First, Certification, and Career and Technical Education to the July 17th Board of Regents Meeting.

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Guida it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education roll over the remaining items to the July 17th BOR meeting.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Guida it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, L. Adrain, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, M. Santos

NAYS: 0

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.